



Luigi Pirandello and the Cinema

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he later realizes that it isn't really his own or his best work or even simply his good work.

If I were speaking as an artist, I'd agree with you entirely, but as a student or critic or fan or whatever you want to call it, I can't agree at all. But let's return to Hollywood. Despite what your biographers, Georges Charensol and Roger Régent, describe as hard times, what with your separation from all your friends and colleagues in France as well as your difficulty in finding suitable pictures to make in America, your recollections of Hollywood seem to fire your enthusiasm and affection a great deal.

It is true that I missed my friends and my country a great deal. I could have been happier in Hollywood if I'd been there under different circumstances, but that wasn't Hollywood's fault. And the times weren't so bad as that. I could have worked if I'd wanted to, but I didn't find good subjects. Well, no, that's not exactly right. After *Flame of New Orleans*, which didn't do well at the box office, it's true that I couldn't find work. For five years, ever since the success of my first English film, *The Ghost Goes West*, I'd been getting telegrams from Hollywood: come and we'll give you anything; we can't get along without you—you know the sort of thing. But after one flop, suddenly nobody had ever heard of me. That's the polite way of putting it in Hollywood. But once *I Married a Witch* was made and well received, the responsibility for not working was entirely mine. I was on a five-year contract at Para-

mount. After *I Married a Witch* came out, they renewed my option for another year. They could renew my option, but I couldn't renew theirs. Strange system. Well, they gave me all sorts of things to read and nothing pleased me. I just couldn't find anything that was my style. It was wartime, you know, and nothing suited me; it was all wrong, not my sort of thing at all. At one point after Buddy de Silva had offered me a number of subjects that I had to turn down, he said in exasperation: "I didn't know you were such a specialist." He was really surprised that I turned down so many things because they weren't in my line. In those days, you know, they had a list of directors tacked up on a bulletin board. Whoever was free would do the next picture. They proposed, for example, that I do a very dark and sad Graham Greene story. I was horrified, and said, "No, I can't, it's not my sort of picture." The next name on the list was Fritz Lang's, so he did it, and of course he did it well. Once, after several months of inactivity—I'd been reading a lot, that is, but hadn't found anything I liked enough to begin working on—the front office at Paramount reminded me that I was being paid. That amused me, so I said, "OK, don't pay me until I work. Don't give me another check until I start writing again." The big boss was absolutely scandalized at the thought. No pay! It was a religion, that weekly paycheck in Hollywood. I had blasphemed. I don't think I could have said anything that would have shocked him more.

FRANK NULF

Luigi Pirandello and the Cinema

It would be difficult to overestimate the influence of Luigi Pirandello on twentieth-century theater. As the author of such plays as *Each In His Own Way*, *Henry IV*, *Tonight We Improvise*, and *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, his contributions to developments in

contemporary drama are well known, and it is incontestable that he is one of the most significant of those responsible for innovations in both theatrical form and content in the first decades of the 1900's. His relationship to Anouilh, Sartre, and Camus has been clearly shown by

Thomas Bishop in *Pirandello and the French Theatre*. Beckett, Inonesco, Genet, and Vauthier all are indebted to him as they have publicly acknowledged.

Because Pirandello's reputation, especially outside of Italy, rests primarily on his plays, it is important to recall the scope of his total career, and the quality and importance of his writing and activities outside of the theater. Novelist, playwright, poet, and Nobel Prize winner, Pirandello was clearly Italy's greatest literary figure following the decline of D'Annunzian romanticism until his death in 1936. But he was also concerned with the cinema and, as a result, made some valuable contributions to film thought.

For a writer to have dealings with the film industry in Italy during the early years of this century was not at all unusual. Most of the major figures signed contracts to write scenarios or silent-film titles, or to permit films to be made from their stories or plays. Those authors included Giovanni Verga, Guido Gozzano, Lucio d'Ambra, Luciano Zuccoli, Marco Praga, Gabriele D'Annunzio, and Pirandello. In the case of D'Annunzio a unique contract was negotiated with Ambrosio Studios in 1911—which included not only the rights to his published works but to all his future writings as well. He thus became the source for a large number of films. The incentive for most of those working with the cinema was simply the large amounts of money the studios were willing to pay for help and for properties. Pirandello, too, was interested in the money, but, at the same time, he was almost alone among the literary figures in Italy in being concerned with the aesthetic problems of film and its possibilities as an art form. Even D'Annunzio, in spite of the fact that he did the screenplay for the mammoth *Cabiria*, seems to have had little interest in motion pictures. He did not like films and rarely went to see one; *Cabiria* itself he never did see.¹

Curiosity about the nature of Pirandello's relationship to motion pictures is certainly stimulated by such references to him as that made

by Eisenstein when commenting on the uses of sound and narration:

In the sound-film the sub-title, maintaining its place among the expressive means (try to remove the titles from *Minin and Pozharsky* and see what is left!), and its counterpart, the actual voice of the narrator (a 'convention' nearly identical with that of the theatres we have been describing), are successfully employed. The latter means is a voice whose dramatically weaving potentialities have scarcely been touched by the cinema. The late Pirandello used to dream aloud of what could be done with this voice, when we met in Berlin in 1929. How close is such a voice, intervening in the action from outside the action, to Pirandello's whole concept!²

Mention of Pirandello by contemporary filmmakers shows that his theatrical innovations have their logical extensions in the film medium—an implication of which he was perfectly well aware. Jean Luc-Godard, for example, whose cinema is characterized by his treatment of the "real" as an unpredictable blending of illusion and reality, fact and fiction, is among those who are indebted to Luigi Pirandello. He has said:

I believe I start more from the documentary, in order to give truth to fiction. I am also interested in the theatrical aspect . . . I would like to film *Six Characters in Search of an Author* to show, cinematically, what theatre is. By being a realist one discovers the theatre . . . as in *The Golden Coach*: behind the theatre is life and behind life, the theatre. My point of departure was the imaginary and I discovered the real: but, behind the real there was the imaginary.³

It is a statement that might have been made by Pirandello himself. In films like *Breathless*, *The Little Soldier*, and *Une Femme est une Femme*, Godard demonstrates quite clearly these Pirandellian themes.

Others who use cinematic extensions of Pirandellian motifs are Bergman and Renoir. Bergman's *Fangelse* (1948), the first film he both wrote and directed, undertaken after he had written and staged three plays for the theater, invites comparison with *Six Characters in Search of an Author* because of its structure and characters. Parallels are to be found also

in other Bergman pictures, such as *The Devil's Eye* with its narrator commenting on the action and intervening in the film. Renoir's *Le Carrosse d'or* is directly in the Pirandellian tradition. A play-within-a-play-within-a-film, it is a tangled web of the real and the illusory. That the similarity of theme is anything but coincidental is shown by Renoir's own remarks: "Pirandello influenced most of the modern authors . . . he opened a new window on the infinite horizons of the collective imagination, and like so many others, I certainly breathed some of that air."⁴

If Pirandello's influence on film-makers stems primarily from exciting new concepts he demonstrated in theatrical form there is ample evidence to indicate that one of his great hopes was to play an even more direct role in cinematic developments. Late in his life he said:

In theater I have been a revolutionary. I would like, if I can—and I am certain that I will be able—to bring to the field of motion pictures also the revolutions of which I dream.⁵

From the earliest evidence of Pirandello's participation in cinema enterprises (1913) to the end of his life, film did play an important part in his wide-ranging career. Caught up, like so many during those years, in the great novelty of film, and its potential as an art form, he felt the need not only to work directly with this new artistic tool but to address himself to the aesthetic challenge it posed. In addition, as a playwright, he found himself in the middle of the controversy of the late twenties and thirties over whether or not the cinema would destroy the theater. For at the very moment that he was providing new sources of vitality for the theater the economic threat posed by films was extremely real. In order to understand the significance of that threat one has only to look at the sheer quantity of film production in Italy during the second decade of the century. In 1913, one of the most prolific years, Italy produced some 738 films.⁶

It is well to remember, too, that quantity alone does not account for the fact that during the years 1910–1919 the Italian film was at the

zenith of its popularity and influence. By 1908, when Ambrosio made the first version of *The Last Days of Pompeii*, the form and techniques of the "film spectacle" had emerged. Incredible productions followed: *Quo Vadis?* (1912), *Cabiria* (1914), *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *Julius Caesar* (1918). These Italian "feature films," as they were even then called, had an almost immediate effect in studios around the world, not only because of their length, format, and techniques, but because of their great financial success. Little wonder then that a man with Pirandello's great intellectual and artistic curiosity could be caught up in the excitement of Italy's thriving cinematic enterprises.

There is considerable evidence that documents Pirandello's interest in films. In 1913 he wrote his first film scenario. It was a script for a film which was to have starred Giovanni Grasso, but the producing company, Morgana Films, went out of business and the scenario was never produced. In 1915 he labored again over a script which was destined never to be filmed; a version of *Confessioni di un Italiano* by Nievo.⁷

Interestingly, it was during these same years that Pirandello was also involved in his first attempts at playwriting. His first play, the one-act *La Morsa* (The Trap), appeared in 1912, and his first three-act, *Se Non Così* (If Not Thus) in 1915. None of these early plays made much of an impression on the world of the theater. It was not until *Pensaci Giacomino!* (Just Think, Giacomino) that Pirandello began to attract more than casual attention as a playwright. The year of that play was 1916, and Pirandello was 49 years old. Unlike those early plays, the film scripts have been lost and forgotten. But, from his work on those scenarios, and from his experience with film and its stars, directors, and technicians, he drew inspiration for a novel, *Si Gira* (Shoot!). The book was written during 1914 and early 1915 and first appeared as a serial in the *Nuova Antologia*, June–August 1915. It was published in bound volume form in 1916 and reprinted in 1925 with a new title, *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio Operatore*

(Notebooks of Serafino Gubbio, Cameraman). *Shoot!* was translated into English by C. K. Scott-Moncrieff (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927, and New York: E. P. Dutton 1927).

This little-known novel is an experimental work dealing with the world of motion pictures, centering around an alienated and existential hero, the cameraman Gubbio. *Si Gira*, which is part diary and part scenario, is probably one of the earliest examples of what has come to be called the "film-novel." In it Pirandello goes beyond the genre limitations of the novel and makes use of devices which are not, basically, literary; they are cinematic. A reading of the book suggests parallels with Robbe-Grillet, Joyce, and other experimentalists. Uses of the literary equivalents of filmic techniques—cuts, flashbacks, and shot descriptions—abound in the novel. Parts of the book are even written in scenario form; the reader is constantly pulled between reality and illusion, one minute thinking he is meant to be watching a film and the next reading a diary.

In addition, some critics have found manifestations in *Si Gira* of traits which, in later years, would lead to neorealism in Italian films. Mario Apollonio, for example, sees it as "one of the first texts basic to the principles of Neorealism," and Stefano Crespi has also paid considerable attention to this aspect of the novel.⁸ While it is by no means a neorealist manifesto, the book does provoke speculation about it as a precursor of neorealist attitudes. Finally, the book is important in a study of Pirandello's career because it is a pivotal work: clearly transitional between prose and drama. Evidently the cinema was, to some degree, instrumental in that transition.

The active interest Pirandello began to show in the movie industry around 1913 betokened a shift of attitude. In earlier years he tended to treat film lightly, as did many intellectuals. There is, in fact, some evidence suggesting that, like many other writers of the time, regardless of their personal feelings about motion pictures, he was drawn into films initially by the monetary lure more than any other factor.

According to Crespi, the earliest gesture Pirandello made toward the cinema was to write to Morgana Films in 1913 with proposals for two films; he was very careful to specify that he was to be paid at a decent price for each. Crespi also quotes the eldest son of the writer, Stefano Landi, as saying that the initial contacts of his father with the cinema, far from being aesthetically ideal, were "determined essentially by economic motives."⁹

Before 1914, Pirandello, like many others, had considered films something of an amusing joke. It was an attitude soon to change. He was living then at the edge of the Via Nomentana in Rome; almost in the country, with gardens and orchards, and where the solitude was conducive to his work. But from the window he could see the glass roofs of the film studios; his attention was often caught by them. Enrico Roma gives the following account of the beginning of the writer's real interest in films:

One morning, to our surprise, we find that the poet had let himself be lured by curiosity to observe a movie set. Lucio d'Ambra had introduced him to Soava and Carmine Gallone, movie makers of singular merit; with that he had put his foot in hell. He wanted to know everything, and to learn as quickly as possible what was happening in there, even the most laughable mysteries of the yet primitive techniques. He came back again and again, and then stayed away from it for a period of time. Within a few months there appeared in the bookstores *Si Gira*, a novel of movie making which revealed for the first time a strange environment and the intimate meaning of all that work; a philosophic interpretation of the cinema, not only as a new artistic means but as a very new aspect of life.¹⁰

Whatever the motivational mixture, Pirandello lent his works and his name to a long list of films in the years which followed. Beginning in 1918 with Lucio D'Ambra and Amleto Palermi's film *Papa mio, mi Piaccion Tutti!* (for which Pirandello suggested scenes and episodes), there were 28 films made from his plays, stories, and novels. This does not include the important, but never filmed, screenplay of

Six Characters in Search of an Author, which he wrote in collaboration with Adolf Lantz. The films were not only produced in Italy but in the United States, France, Germany, and South America as well.

In the production of many of these films Pirandello himself played little or no part. But this is not to say that he was out of touch with the industry. He was working seriously with films from at least as early as 1919 when he was one of the founding partners of a production company called *Tespi*.¹¹

It is not so difficult to think of Pirandello as a film producer if we remember that in 1925 he attempted to inject some vitality into the sagging fortunes of the legitimate theater by setting up his own company. Such may have been part of the purpose of the *Tespi* group, for in the early postwar years, Italian cinema was suffering from the rigidity with which it adhered to the formula films which had been so successful for so long. *Tespi* was founded by Arnaldo Frateili, Umberto Fracchia, and Pirandello. The firm had a clear literary bias, as a look at the films they produced shows. In 1920 Frateili made *Una Notte Romantica* (A Romantic Night) which was based, despite that title, on a story by Edgar Allan Poe. Other films were: *La Scala di Seta* (The Silken Staircase), from Luigi Chiarelli's comedy; *Cesar Birotteau*, from Balzac; *L'Indiana* (The Indian Girl) by Umberto Fracchia, based on a novel by Georges Sand; *La Bella e La Bestia* (The Beauty and the Beast), an original story of Fracchia's; and a film based on Pirandello's *La Rosa* (The Rose). One of the first *Tespi* films was a strictly commercial venture called *La Pantera di Neve*, by Arnaldo Frateili, on which Pirandello acted as advisor. The screenplay was written by his son, Stefano Landi. What happened to *Tespi* is not clear; as a company it simply seemed to fade from the scene, though the founders continued to be outstanding names in the industry.

Some of the finest film versions of Pirandello's work were made outside of Italy, outstanding among them two treatments of *Il fu*

Mattia Pascal. The first was made in 1925 by Marcel L'Herbier in France, and starred the great Russian Ivan Mosjoukine, along with Marthe Belot, Pauline Certon, and Michel Simon. L'Herbier's production was noteworthy primarily because of the work done by Mosjoukine and the sets conceived by Cavalcanti. The second version in 1937, was done by Pierre Chenal (who along with Armand Salacrou and Christian Stengel did the screen play). The film is of interest, too, because Pirandello himself, along with Roger Vitrac, worked on the dialogues.¹²

Three American films have been made from the plays. In the case of *Come tu mi vuoi* (As You Desire Me) Hollywood wasted little time in securing the film rights to the successful drama. The play was published in Milan in 1930 and had its first production in that same year, also in Milan. It opened in New York in 1939 and the following year Hollywood released the film. *As You Desire Me* was adapted by Gene Markey, directed by George Fitzmaurice, and starred Greta Garbo, Erich von Stroheim, and Melvyn Douglas. *Come prima, meglio di prima*, though it was staged in New York as early as 1923, was not taken up by Hollywood until 1945, and was favored again with another adaptation in 1956. The 1945 film, *This Love of Ours*, was a Universal production adapted by Bruce Manning, John Klorer, and Leonard Lee; it was directed by William Dieterle and starred Merle Oberon, Charles Korvin and Claude Rains. In 1956 the same trio of writers, working this time for Universal International, did another adaptation of the same play. With the title *Never Say Goodbye* it was directed by Jerry Hoppner and starred Cornell Borchers, George Sanders, and Rock Hudson.

Shortly after 1930 Pirandello was again tempted to try his hand at a full original scenario for a film. It was in 1930 that Italy produced her first sound film, *La Canzone dell'Amore*, and that picture was based on a story by Pirandello. The author's unhappiness with the handling of his work in that picture led

to his determination to create a more cinematically effective piece. The film which resulted from his efforts, *Acciaio* (Steel), proved to be one of the most important of 1933. Originally entitled *Gioca, Pietro!*, the script was written by Pirandello with the collaboration of his son Stefano. The film was directed by the great German film-maker Walter Ruttmann and starred Isa Pola, Piero Pastore, and Vittorio Bellaccini. This was not the director and cast Pirandello had envisioned but it is a notable assembly in spite of that. The author was enthusiastic about the project and in an interview which took place before the shooting began he had some thoughtful comments to make about what he was attempting. In reply to a request for information about *Gioca, Pietro!* he said:

I promised silence; you will see shortly. (But) I have composed a scenario which is a true score. In many scenes I have taken into consideration the effects to be obtained with sounds, just like a musician in the instrumentation of a lyric work. The sound part will have a great importance in the film. At a certain point the rhythms of the machines become humanized; reaching in this way perfect synchronization between mechanical movements and the beat of human life.¹³

He thus shows a great deal of understanding of the potential of sound. And with regard to the question of who would direct the film and who would star in it he replied:

A great director of universal fame; very probably Pabst or, if he is not free at that time, Eisenstein. They (the stars) have not been chosen yet because that is the privilege of the director.¹⁴

Emilio Cecchi, who had come into the Cines studios to revitalize it, was the supervisor of the film and Pirandello had a great deal of faith in his ability. The entire picture was made at Terni, an industrial town a bit north of Rome, and deals with the iron and steel industry. Environmental elements are extremely important as Ruttmann made rhythmic use of machinery, the ironworks, bicycle races, and festa scenes. *Acciaio* provides further evidence

linking Pirandello with the precursors of neorealism. At least one observer in Italy noted this: Mario Verdone, in a fascinating book called *Gli Intellettuali e il Cinema*, traced the neorealist movement through Umberto Fracchia, Arnaldo Frateili, Mario Corsi, Stefano Landi, and Pirandello. He argues that *Acciaio*, along with some other films, preceded the whole Italian neorealist trend.¹⁵ This is especially interesting because of the general belief that Zavattini and other scenario writers were the inventors of neorealism in the postwar era.

Also of great interest is the scenario of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* written in 1930 by Pirandello with the collaboration of Adolf Lantz.¹⁶ The scenario has never been published in English, or for that matter in Italian either, though a partial translation, the "Prologue," did appear in Italy in *Cinema*, Number 120 (25 June 1941). It is unfortunate that it is not better known for, in addition to being an explication of the play, the script is an exposition in prose form of Pirandello's theories about the cinema, and at the same time can be thought of as a novel using literary equivalents of cinematic devices. Indeed, such an evaluation as the latter is invited by the use of the term "film-novel" in the German title, and takes on considerable validity when Pirandello's experiments with such devices in *Si Gira* are recalled. In any case, Pirandello was sensitive enough to reject the idea of literally transcribing the very verbal play into a film. As a result he wrote a scenario which was "completely distinct from the language which I have employed till now as a method of expressing my experience of life." He went on to say: "I am trying to solve in a purely optical way the same problem one finds at the root of my drama; and which is dealt with in this adaptation. I am compelling myself to render intelligibly, through this visual method, the way in which the six characters and their destinies outside the mind of the author, saturate themselves with life and act independently of him."¹⁷

It is a pity that the film was never made. Pirandello himself was to have played the lead and he visited Hollywood to supervise the preparations going on at Universal. The scenario is a continual flow of visual imagery. Dialogue is secondary to the progression of visual shots. It is a work of pure fantasy in which the physical elements, the characters, the objects in the scenario, are all seen through the eyes of the author/camera. The two points of view are conveniently interchangeable, and are shown to be so in the film-novel. Pirandello recognizes no limitations of either time or place. The script is an intensely subjective description which is heightened by its emphasis on action and visual imagery rather than on dialogue. It demonstrates that Pirandello was not only aware of the differences between theater and cinema but that he was able to move from one form to the other with ease, while, at the same time, utilizing those differences to his advantage.

It is well to remember that not everyone at that time recognized the differences between theater and cinema; theater people especially sometimes seemed shortsighted. Alberto Cavalcanti has mentioned the wasted energy thrown into the production of photographed plays at the beginning of the sound era: "Here the theatrical people felt that they were on ground they knew. But it never occurred to them that a film is not, and never can be, the same thing as a play."¹⁸ It had certainly occurred to Pirandello, as his writings on film theory make very clear.

In 1929, when the theater-versus-cinema debate was at its peak because of the recent advent of the talking film, he addressed himself to the technical and aesthetic problems posed by film in a major essay, "Se il Film Parlante Abolira il Teatro" (Whether the Talking Film Will Abolish the Theater).¹⁹ And, in that same year, his "Il Dramma e il Cinematografo Parlato" (The Drama and the Spoken Cinema) appeared in the newspaper *La Nacion* in Buenos Aires. There is also an "Interview With Pirandello on the Italian Cinema" which was

printed in *La Stampa*, Turin, December 9, 1932. All of which bears witness to the fact that Pirandello's interest in the cinema was a deep and sincere one; the content of these articles reveals a fertile and sensitive mind willing to consider film as an art form and to evaluate its potential, and shortcomings, in that light.

In "Whether the Talking Film Will Abolish the Theater" he begins by acknowledging the importance of the cinema/theater debate, if for no other reason than the light such a confrontation will shed on the unique properties of each. In no uncertain terms he declares that the cinema should leave narration to the novel and leave drama to the theater; for, if films continue to be patterned after the theater, the natural attributes and characteristics of cinema will never be realized.

Unlike those purists who insisted that the only true cinema was a silent cinema, Pirandello was quick to realize that now that the motion pictures had spoken they would never be silent again. What kind of voice it would be was another matter entirely for Pirandello. It is, he believed, foolish to look for that voice in literature. Cinema, he felt at that time, should immerse itself in music. Not vocal music (leave musical melodrama to opera and jazz to the music hall) but music which expresses with and by pure sound. Calling sight and hearing the two most important senses, he suggests an art of pure vision and pure sound, coining the term *Cinemelography* to describe what he feels to be the mission of cinema: the visible language of music.

Thus, Pirandello's attitudes are closely allied with those of the French *avant garde* of the twenties. In that sense he saw film as an art form into which most of the primary directions and problems of modern art inevitably lead. Cubism, Futurism, and Surrealism, with their respective concern for simultaneity, form, motion, and the orchestration of dream, illusion and reality, find logical extensions in film; so too, because it has affinities with each of these directions, does Pirandello's theater.

However, while Pirandello was in sympathy

with the experiments of the *avant garde*, and while many of his ideas corresponded with theirs, he ultimately did not advocate, as some of them did, the complete severing of all ties to story and narrative. His remarks in later interviews make this clear. What he was after was innovation in filmic form which would make use of all the elements available in the other arts in a synthesized, uniquely cinematic structure. And he certainly knew that there is a difference between what words can do and what the cinema can do.

In addition to aesthetic concerns, Pirandello was troubled by the state of the Italian film industry during the late twenties and thirties. Having been unwilling to experiment and keep abreast of exciting developments in the US, Russia, Germany, and France the Italian formula film was unable to compete at the box office. He took the industry to task at every opportunity: "The problem of the Italian cinema . . . is not one of technicians and of competency but, on the contrary, one of solutions used and re-used, accepted indifferently and without revisions of any kind."²⁰ He attacked both production methods and distribution structures in his desire to revitalize his country's cinema.

Pirandello, then, was able to isolate those elements which could best be taken advantage of by films, and to point out the unique qualities of the medium. He was able to see the distinctions between film and theater without losing sight of the advantages of each. He viewed the entire cinema/theater conflict as only a pseudo-problem. But he was anxious to prod the cinema industry, and those who created for it, into exploring the natural avenues available to it—avenues at which he had clearly posted the signs, not only in his critical writings, but just as importantly in the examples he offered in *Si Gira, Acciaio*, and the scenario of *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.

In purely literary terms, Pirandello must be considered one of the pioneers in the use of cinematic writing techniques. By applying

cinematic imagination to narrative style he made use of a device that was to become a characteristic of twentieth-century literature. Pirandello saw the future of film in illusion and in fantasy. Not the fantasy of trivial, escapist cinema entertainment but a fantasy which reveals, through its sensory appeal, some truth about the human condition. It was the possibility of a "cinema of ideas" that intrigued him, just as he worked toward a theater of ideas. It was through fantasy that Pirandello felt he could best arrive at a revelation of truth. His vision was of a cinema that would do no less. In reply to Roma's question of how he saw the future of the cinema, he said:

"Without limitation."

NOTES

¹ Tommaso Antongini, *Vita Segreta di Gabriele D'Annunzio* (Milano: A. Mondadori, 1938); p. 174. Antongini has a very interesting chapter called "D'Annunzio e il Cinematografo."

² Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form* (Cleveland: World, 1957); p. 189.

³ Quoted by Andrew Sarris in the *New York Film Bulletin*, Number 46 (1964).

⁴ In a letter to Thomas Bishop dated May 7, 1956 and quoted in *Pirandello and the French Theatre*, p. 143.

⁵ In Stefano Crespi, "L'esperienza cinematografica in Pirandello," *Vite e Pensiero*, Vol. 50 (1967); p. 847.

⁶ My production figures are taken from Pierre Leprohon, *Le Cinéma Italien* (Paris: Seghers, 1966).

⁷ My source for this information, and a useful source in general for factual material in Pirandello's activities in cinema, is Vol. 6 of the *Film-lexicon degli autori e delle Opere* (Rome: Bianco e Nero, 1958); pp. 647-651.

⁸ Quoted by Stefano Crespi, op. cit., p. 850.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Enrico Roma, "Pirandello e il Cinema," *Comœdia* (15 July-15 August, 1932); p. 20.

¹¹ There is information on *Tespi* in both Vernon Jarratt, *The Italian Cinema* (London: Falcon Press, 1951) and in *50 Years of Italian Cinema* (Rome: Carlo Bestetti, 1954), the American edition edited by Herman Weinberg. Leprohon says that *Tespi-Film* produced its first picture in 1918; *Frate Sole*, by Mario Corsi.

¹² For more information on both versions of *Il fu Mattia Pascal* see Osvaldo Campassi and Virgilio Sabel, "Chenal, L'Herbier e *Il fu Mattia Pascal*," *Cinema*, prima serie, No. 117 (10 May, 1941). Also see Mario Pannunzio, "Chenal di Fronte a Pirandello," *Cinema*, prima serie, No. 10 (25 November, 1936).

¹³ Roma, p. 22.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Mario Verdone, *Gli Intellettuali e il Cinema* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1952), p. 226.

¹⁶ Luigi Pirandello and Adolf Lantz, *Sechs Personen suchen einen Autor: Film-novelle . . . nach dem gleichnamigen Theaterstück von Pirandello* (Berlin: Reimar Hobbing, 1930). French translation by E. Goldey, "Six Personnages en quête d'Auteur:

histoire pour l'écran par Luigi Pirandello et Adolf Lantz," *La Revue du Cinéma*, Number 10 (May, 1930), pp. 35–53.

¹⁷ In "Dramma e Sonoro," *Cinema*, prima serie, Number 81 (10 November 1939), pp. 277–278.

¹⁸ Alberto Cavalcanti, "The Sound Film," in Lewis Jacobs, *The Emergence of Film Art* (New York: Hopkinson and Blake, 1969), p. 175.

¹⁹ The essay first appeared in the newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, Milan, 16 June 1929. On July 28, 1929 it appeared as a feature article in *The New York Times*.

²⁰ See "Intervista con Luigi Pirandello sul Cinema Italiano" in the newspaper *La Stampa*, Turin, December 9, 1932.

RANDALL CONRAD

Diaries of Two Chambermaids

Mirbeau's *Diary of a Chambermaid* is a violent, cruel novel, written out of hatred for the corruption of bourgeois society, for the lies and servility with which it infects every mind and relationship. Celestine's "diary" intersperses the story of her service in the Lanlaire household—ending with Joseph's robbery, her marriage to him, and their new life as café proprietors in Cherbourg—with recollections that fill in her background and character. A contradictory character, in which a sensual depravity, acquired from her masters, exists together with the most ardent love*: the two poles are transcended only in her terrible attraction to Joseph. Published in 1900, only months after the scandalous second court-martialing of Dreyfus, the novel uses Celestine's lucid observations to portray all the machinations of a provincial bourgeoisie as it begins to brandish anti-Semitism and nationalism as political weapons.

* "I shall gather the flowers for his bouquet, one by one, in the garden of my heart . . . where grow the deadly flowers of debauchery, but where also bloom the tall white lilies of love."

The two film versions were produced under practically opposite circumstances. Renoir made his (1946, with Paulette Goddard and Burgess Meredith) during a period of exile, no doubt unsure of his future although willing to work for American studios, filming a Hollywood script on Hollywood sets, a world away from his prewar work in France. Buñuel, on the other hand, was at the height of his new creative freedom when a French producer offered him the chance to film the novel he admired (1964, with Jeanne Moreau and Michel Piccoli).

Renoir's film retains some of the brutal scenes in Mirbeau, like Joseph's sadistic killing of the geese, and it creates new ones (in the final sequence, a sudden image of Joseph lashing at the crowd, with his horsewhip). Renoir gives all the richness he can to particular scenes, letting some develop naturally, giving unexpected turns to others (the scene in the greenhouse), creating the suspense and climax with skill. But, one feels—this marks the decline of Renoir's cinema—whatever style the film has is only compensation for a deficiency in conception.